

What can cause my cat stress?

Every cat is an individual. Whilst some cats may generally appear very laid back and seemingly unflappable, other cats can be much more sensitive and find many things around them stressful. Some sources of stress are:



- A lack of key resources such as litter trays, food, places to hide or climb, scratching post etc. A ratio of one per cat plus one extra is ideal.
- Space to eat alone away from other pets or cats.
- Moving home.
- Other pets.
- Large number of cats in the neighbourhood.
- Unfamiliar cats intruding into the home.
- Inappropriate or unsuitable handling
- Home decoration or building works.
- A change in routine.
- Guests visiting.
- A new baby.
- Unneutered stray male cats.

What can I do to help them?

It's really important that you get your cat checked by a vet to make sure there are no health issues which might be affecting your cat's behaviour, particularly if you have detected a problem with your cat's physical health, such as weight loss or signs of cystitis.

We can offer behavioural advice. We will take a detailed history of your cat, their environment and home lifestyle which will provide the necessary information we will need to help identify the source or sources of stress they may be exposed to. Once this information is provided, we can offer recommendations for changes that can be made within the home to minimise or even remove the sources of stress.

Consulting Times

Hillock Lane Surgery

Monday to Friday
8.30am to 7pm

Saturday
8.30am to 1pm



Blackpool Surgery

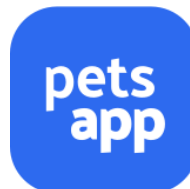
Monday to Friday
8.30am to 6pm

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Hillock Lane



Blackpool



Stressed cat?

Rowan Veterinary Centre

"where pets come first"

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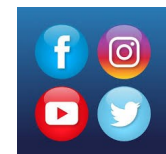
01772 639800

**The Old Bank
369 Whitegate Drive
Blackpool
FY3 9PH**

01253 766352

www.rowanvets.co.uk

admin@rowanvets.co.uk



A Cat's History



The domestic cat has evolved from a largely independent and solitary species called the African or Near Eastern Wildcat. They are designed to hide

stress, pain or other “weaknesses” because in the wild this would make them an easy target for predators.

As a result, your cat can be very sensitive to their surroundings and become anxious or frustrated by things going on around them, or by the way people interact with them.

It's very important to manage and reduce stress in your cat because if your cat is stressed, they can become both emotionally and physically unwell. They may develop physical illnesses as well as display problem behaviour.

Often owners may only notice that their cat is “not quite right”. They may lose their appetite, be sick occasionally or behave in a way that owners have never seen before i.e. spraying urine against the wall indoors or behaving aggressively.



The sooner the signs of stress in your cat are noticed, the sooner you can resolve the problem. This means keeping a close eye on your cat's physical health as well as their behaviour. Anything ‘odd’ or ‘out of character’ could be a sign of stress!

How can I tell if my cat is stressed?

There are both physical and behavioural signs of a stressed cat:

Physical Symptoms

- Diarrhoea
- Vomiting
- Bald patches or sores on the coat caused by over-grooming.
- Runny nose and eyes.
- Symptoms get worse in cats with chronic health conditions or recovery from illness is slow; stress can affect a cat's immune system and ability to fight disease.
- Eating non-food items such as plastic or wool (called ‘pica’)
- Poor appetite or eating less than normal.
- Looking lethargic and sleeping more than usual.
- Excessive eating and/or drinking.
- Sudden weight lost or weight gain.
- A poor coat condition.
- Not going to the toilet as often as usual (faeces and/or urine).
- Frequent squatting, painful urination with blood e.g. Cystitis).



Behavioural Symptoms

- Any noticeable change in your cat's usual patterns of behaviour and routines.
- Toileting outside of the litter tray e.g. Behind the sofa, under the bed, on the bed etc.
- Spraying urine on furniture and other items around the home.
- Scratching excessively on the furniture.
- Aggressive behaviour directed towards you, your family or visitors.
- Aggressive behaviour directed towards other pets in the home.
- Excessive meowing.
- An increased dependency on you or your family, constantly wanting to interact.



- Withdrawal from you and the family, no longer interested in interacting with you.
- Unresponsiveness to things going on around them i.e. doesn't jump or get startled by loud noises or quick movements.
- Constant vigilance and jumps at every sudden sound or movement.
- Frequent hiding when in the home e.g. under the sofa or bed, on top of a wardrobe etc.
- Reluctance to play having previously been very playful.
- Reluctance to come into the home.
- Reluctance to go outside.
- Excessive grooming.
- Repeated pacing when in the home, often accompanied by loud meowing.

Other signs of a stressed cat can include:

- Crouching often and looking tense.
- Ears rotated backwards frequently or flattened down.
- Wide open eyes with very dilated pupils which makes their eyes look black.
- Staring at the floor with a fixed, glazed expression.
- Rapid and frequent grooming that usually lasts around five seconds, starting and stopping quite suddenly.
- Frequent head shaking.
- Rippling, twitching skin on their back.
- Exaggerated swallowing and quick flicks of the tongue onto the nose.

One of the best ways to protect your cat against stress is to try to anticipate the sorts of things that might cause them stress in the first place, such as moving to a new home or the addition of a new cat to the household.